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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MASERU 000545

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SUBJECT: UN CEREMONIES UNDERSCORE U.S. GOALS

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OPENING SESSION

1. Lesotho headquarters of the United Nations kicked off its celebration of the UN ceremony with a program at the Maseru Convention Center. During the commemorative event, specific U.S. objectives such as poverty alleviation, Millennium Challenge goals and the war against HIV/AIDS were recognized by a number of speakers. The Minister of Finance (key note speaker) addressed at length the need to work closely with donors to reach the fundamental goals of poverty reduction. United Nation's Resident Coordinator, Mrs. Hodan Haji-Mohamud, specifically thanked the United States as well as the European Union for their important roles as partners in achieving international objectives, especially in addressing the AIDS pandemic and seeking methods to eliminate poverty worldwide and specifically in Lesotho.

2. The Acting Foreign Minister (Minister of Local Government) Dr. Pontso Sekatle, said in her closing remarks that Lesotho supported UN measures (including several) sought by the U.S., viz the establishment of a Peace Building Commission (one of our goals during the UN Summit) and the establishment of the UN Council (eliminating The Commission on Human Rights has been one of our top priorities over the past 2 years.) We secured Lesotho's support in making the essential reform to move from the Commission to the Human Rights Council. In other activities, primarily held at the National University of Lesotho, projects of United Nation's agencies here on the ground, e.g. UNICEF, WHO and UNDP, were recognized. Students and faculty as well as government officials participated in the 2nd day's ceremony.

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO PROGRAM

3. Minister Thahane traced the history of the UN from the end of the second World War, when nations came together to create conditions of collective security and avert future wars. Over the years nations recognized that the definition of security did not only end with the absence of war, but evolved to address issues on economic development, and an end to hunger, disease and ignorance. Minister Thahane commended the Acting Vice Chancellor for raising the profile of the university, and charged students to undertake research into the relevance of the UN to Lesotho, and to monitor Lesotho's performance in achieving agreed Millennium Development goals. He added that Lesotho would undertake a national census in April next year and would form the baseline for planning and measuring future achievements. He looked forward to the involvement of NUL students in the exercise.

4. The UN Resident Coordinator discussed the Millennium Development Goals, which had received broad political consensus. These goals, she said, are measurable landmarks used as tools for assessing the country's progress in making health and education accessible to all, and in reducing poverty. She commended Lesotho for its achievement in introducing free primary education, and for incorporating the goals into her Poverty Strategy Paper and the 2020 Vision. She highlighted the vulnerability of women to poverty, violence, HIV/AIDS, and pointed out that investment in women was essential to achieving most of the goals.

5. The UNICEF representative launched a five-year UNICEF/UNAIDS campaign on children and HIV/AIDS, whose theme is " Unite for Children. Unite Against AIDS". He called on the Lesotho government to put children at the top of the political agenda by accelerating programs intended to support their well-being.

COMMENT

6. We found the tenor of the United Nations events reflective of two (2) things: 1) the collaborative manner in which we

have been working with the Resident Coordinator to ensure that USG goals and objectives are primarily foci of the UN programs here in Lesotho, and 2) a singular avoidance of any criticism of U.S. foreign policy. Post has been diligently providing public information on the situations in Iraq, Guantanamo and Afghanistan as well as on our own Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) goals and those of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Reduction (PEPFAR). We believe having a series of such large public events with very positive statements about U.S. programs being made throughout, is an indication that we are reaching both our public diplomacy and policy objectives amongst leaders in Lesotho as well as amongst our partners in

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the international community. End Comment

PERRY